



Wayne County Farmland Preservation Plan

**Prepared by:
Mount Olive College
Lois Britt Agribusiness Center
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Acknowledgements

The Wayne County Farmland Preservation Plan was written by W. Stan Dixon. Dr. Dixon received an Ed.D. in education from N.C. State University in 2003. He recently retired from the N.C. Cooperative Extension as county extension director in Greene County.

Sandy Maddox, associate director of the Lois G. Britt Agribusiness Center at Mount Olive College, researched and edited the plan. Dr. Maddox has more than 30 years of experience in agriculture.

The following agencies and individuals helped develop the Farmland Preservation Plan:

Cooperative Extension

Howard Scott, county extension director; Kevin Johnson and Eileen Coite, agents, agriculture.

N.C. Division of Forest Resources

Dwight Bryant, Wayne County ranger

Wayne County Planning Department

Connie Price, director

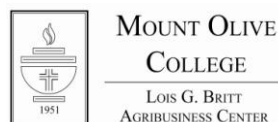
Wayne County Government

Lee Smith, manager

Wayne County Board of Commissioners

Lois G. Britt Agribusiness Center, Mount Olive College

The Citizens, Farmers and Agribusinesses of Wayne County





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Executive Summary

Introduction

The goal of this plan is to understand the importance of Wayne County agriculture and to develop a Farmland Preservation Plan that will address the many challenges that are facing farmers and agriculture. Farmland is an irreplaceable natural resource, and the farmers who are stewards of this land are important to the county for their value to both the local economy and the quality of life they afford to county residents. Agriculture is a valuable resource to the county providing 21.8 percent of the total economic output. In 2008 farm gross sales were more than \$388,000,000, and employment in farming and agribusiness was 20.4 percent of the county's total employment. Wayne County is fortunate to possess abundant natural and human resources that will enable it to prosper in the future.

Definition of Agriculture

This plan uses a broad definition of agriculture that encompasses all aspects of the cultivation and production of plant material and animal products as well as the marketing, processing and distribution of these products and other secondary on-farm enterprises such as forestry and agricultural tourism (Alamance County, North Carolina Farmland Protection Plan).

Findings

Between 1997 and 2007, Wayne County lost 54,000 acres of farmland, which can be attributed to an increase in population. Wayne County is experiencing the same population growth pressure that the entire state is experiencing. In December 2008, the United States Census named North Carolina the fastest growing state in the country and third in actual numbers gained. This increase in population translates into more housing, schools, shopping and infrastructure to meet the demand.

Farmers are aging. The average age of Wayne County farmers is 55 years old. This leads to an increased need for farm transition planning education. Young people are not interested in pursuing careers in agriculture due to the belief that farming is not profitable and is too demanding.

The majority of non-farm residents are not aware of the impact of agriculture on the economy of Wayne County. Conversely non-farm residents believe local government should take steps to help preserve farmland and encourage farmers to expand. This is based on their belief that farming enhances scenic beauty, open spaces and is a positive asset to the environment. The overriding opinion of agribusiness leaders and citizens is that farmers need assistance from government to preserve farming as an economic engine in the county. Following are some recommendations that can help to make farmland preservation a reality.

Recommendations

1. Encourage Wayne County Commissioners to consider using sale tax options instead of raising property taxes when increased revenue is required.
2. Create an awareness campaign that will educate local leaders and citizens on the value of agriculture to the county.
3. Develop and promote a comprehensive youth Agricultural Leadership Development Program that targets youth ages kindergarten to college.
4. Make needed technical and business training readily available for existing and new farmers through a variety of delivery modes that best fit the farmers' schedules and learning styles.
5. Increase efforts to educate farmers, landowners and non-farm residents on the available farmland preservation tools.
6. Develop an Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District Ordinance for Wayne County.
7. Actively work to engage local organizations and government organizations in preserving, supporting and promoting farming and agribusiness in Wayne County.
8. Encourage local government officials and planners to engage and inform the VAD Advisory Board and other county agencies as to the impact of infrastructure activities on agricultural enterprises.
9. Support an agricultural marketing specialist position to coordinate the growing needs of a diversified farming community.
10. Support a Wayne County Cost of Community Services study.

A Need for Action

Wayne County's economy relies to a large part on agriculture and agribusiness. While Wayne County leadership recognizes the impact of agriculture to the local economy, their support for the development of a Farmland Preservation Plan exemplifies their commitment to address issues relating to farm viability for decades to come. This plan acknowledges the importance of agriculture to the county's overall economic health and recognizes the anticipated pressure from urbanization resulting in rapid loss of farmland statewide. The Wayne County Farmland Preservation Plan will serve to guide the county's efforts to preserve working lands and to recognize the diverse benefits of the agricultural industry.

The plan recognizes:

- That farming is an important component of the county's economy
- That preserving farming is in the public interest and
- That farmland is an irreplaceable natural resource.

According to the N.C. Department of Agriculture, 600,000 acres of farmland were lost from 2002 to 2007. Steve Troxler, agriculture commissioner, reports the loss was due in large part to residential development to accommodate the 1 million people who have relocated to North Carolina since 2000 (NCDA&CS Public Affairs Division press release, February 4, 2009).

Wayne County was established in 1779 and is located in the east central portion of the state in the upper coastal plain. The county measures 29 miles from north to south and 14 to 27 miles from east to west comprising 355,200 acres. Goldsboro is the county seat and is located in the geographic center of the county. The countywide population in 2006 was 113,847. (Appendix B Figure 1, Population Density).

In 1982, the Goldsboro area was designated as a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) by the United States government. The MPO is a transportation policy organization made of local government officials and transportation authorities for areas with populations in excess of 50,000. There are six additional municipalities located in the county: Eureka, Fremont, Mount Olive, Pikeville, Seven Springs and Walnut Creek. Of these six only Walnut Creek is included in the MPO area.

The county's topography is gently rolling uplands with broad bottoms along rivers and creeks. The largest waterway is the Neuse River, which bisects the lower central portion of the county. The county is also drained by the Little River, Northeast Cape Fear and numerous creeks.

While experiencing relatively stable population numbers over the last decade, Wayne County is not immune to the pressures of growth. Newly constructed interstate (I - 795), and improvements to existing highways such as Hwy 70 have afforded Wayne the potential for growth along these corridors (Appendix B Figure 2, Transportation; Figure 3, Growth Strategy Areas; Figure 7, Waterlines).

Wayne County has a diversified industrial base of more than 60 companies that has allowed the county to weather tough economic times and restructuring. Wayne County enjoys a prolific agribusiness sector that plays a vital role in the total economic picture. Reported, in the *2008 Wayne County Gross Farm Sales Estimates* (2008 WCGFSE) compiled by the N.C. Cooperative Extension Wayne County Center, gross farm sales were \$ \$388,234,130. Similar information in the 2007 Census of Agriculture ranks Wayne County as third in the state in overall cash agricultural receipts. Sixty-eight percent of this income is attributed to livestock production. Almost one-half of the remaining income (49 percent) is attributable to the production of tobacco.

One other important component of agriculture in Wayne County is the forestry industry. Almost one-half (40 percent) of the total land area in Wayne County is comprised of forested acreage contributing over \$26 million annually in sales (Wayne Visions 2009). Of interest also is that 96 percent of the forested acreage in Wayne County is privately owned.

Supporting data from IMPLAN, Mig, Inc. reported by N.C. State University economist Mike Walden in 2007 recognized agriculture and agribusiness industries in Wayne County to be 21.8 percent of the gross county product in 2006.

Wayne County is home to Seymour Johnston Air Force Base, which is home to the 4th Fighter Wing and 916th Air Refueling Wing (Appendix B Figure 5). The annual civilian and military payroll is over \$282 million. The economic impact to the county of the military is over \$465 million yearly, which, although significant, is less than the economic impact of agriculture (Visions 2009 A Complete Guide to Wayne County).

Agriculture and the preservation of farmland are imperative to the continued prosperity of the county and its people. While undergoing change through market diversification and commodity shifts, agriculture remains an integral component of the economy of eastern North Carolina. Wayne County residents enjoy additional attributes such as open space, wildlife habitats, storm water management, recreational hunting and fishing, and the retention of the county's rural character and heritage. With these attributes come challenges between the rural/urban interface that must be addressed. Farmland preservation planning provides local government a tool to guide policy and program initiation to ensure agriculture remains a viable entity within the county.

Wayne County: The State of Agriculture

Agriculture is a vital element of Wayne County, contributing to the quality of life and well being of the community. Wayne County farmers successfully grow a variety of crops and livestock. The following represents an overview and inventory of the agricultural sector of Wayne County:

- Land in agricultural production: 175,265 acres
- Land in forest: 141,600 acres
- Number of farms: 723
- Average size of a farm: 242 acres
- Market value of production: all crop sales (includes horticultural crops) \$92,842,403; Livestock sales \$264,383,816
- Total agriculture sales: \$ \$388,234,130
- Average age of farmers: 55 years
- All agriculture/agribusiness income: \$667,120,638, 21.8 percent of the total county value added income (2007 Census of Agriculture)

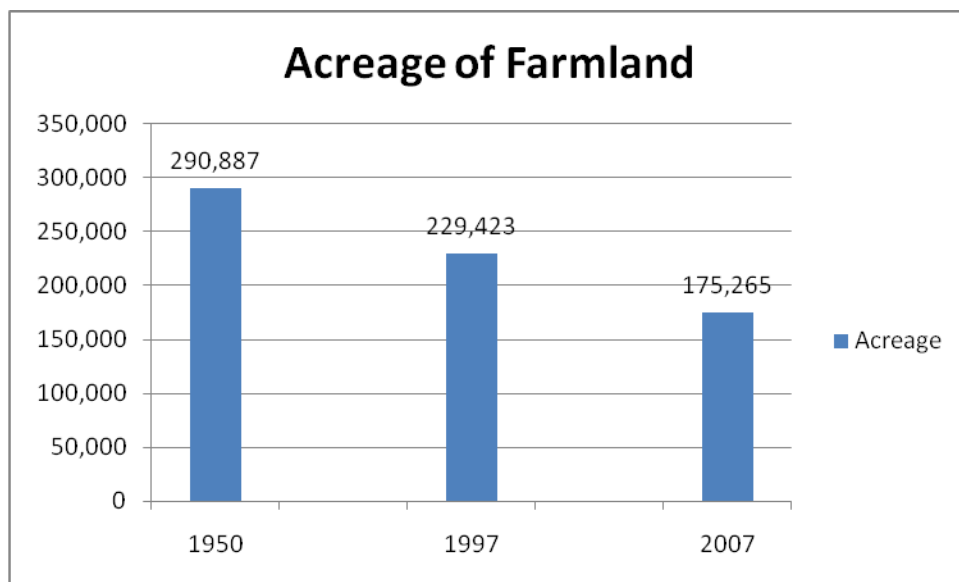


Figure 1. Acreage in agricultural production (2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture)

As Figure 1 indicates farmland has steadily decreased over the last 57 years. A 40 percent decrease or over 115,000 acres was lost with over 54,000 or 24 percent of this coming within the last decade. Figure 2 illustrates this same trend when looking at the decline in the number of farms. Concurrently, population in the county has increased from 1970 to 2008 by 28,263 people supporting the premise that development is a component of this loss (2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture).

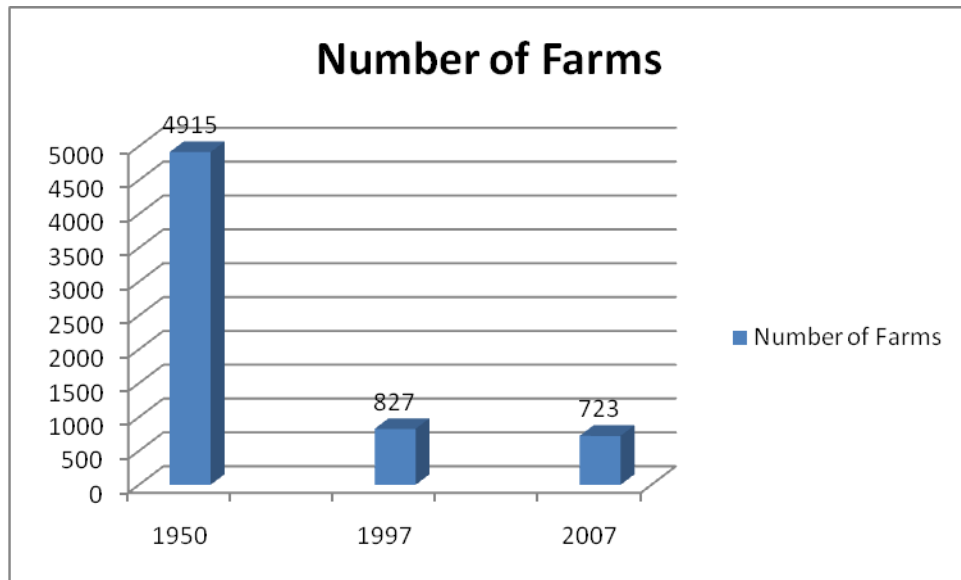


Figure 2. Number of Farms in Wayne County (2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture)

In 2005, *Farm Futures* magazine recognized Wayne County as the fifth-best county in the United States in which to farm. Wayne County ranks third in the state and 57th in the U.S. in total value of agricultural products sold. The county ranks third in the state and 39th in the U.S. in the value of livestock products sold. The major crops produced in the county are tobacco, wheat, corn, soybeans and cotton. Figure 3 denotes the increase in gross farm sales attributed to field crops from 1998 to 2008 (1998 & 2008 WCGFSE). The typical Wayne County farmer is 55 years old, male and caucasian. There are only 32 African American farmers and seven Hispanic farmers in the county (2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture).

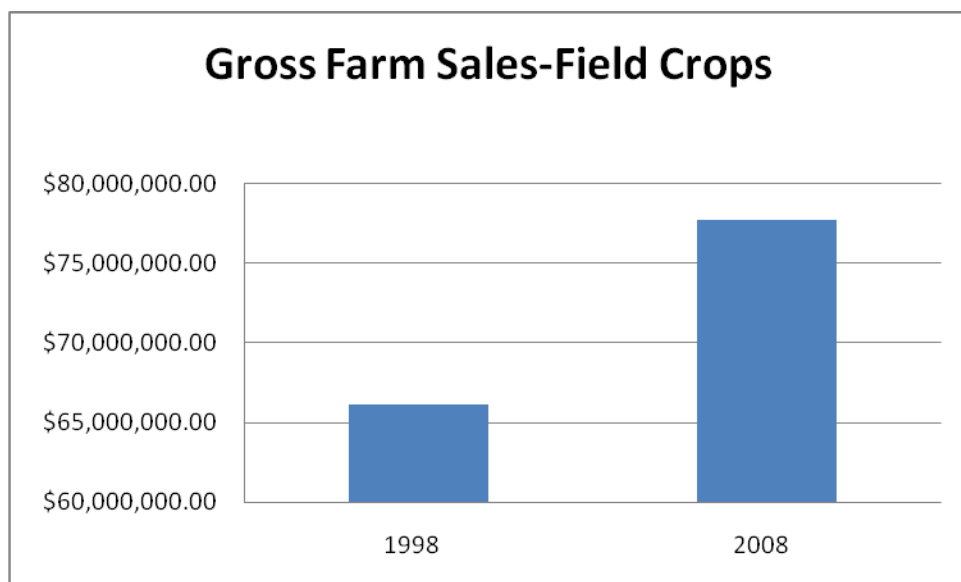


Figure 3. Gross Income From Crop Sales (1998 & 2008 WCGFSE)

The tobacco buyout had a significant impact on the portrait of agriculture in North Carolina and tobacco-dependent counties. The buyout attributed to the reduction in farm numbers and farmers in eastern North Carolina. Although the decrease in farms may to some extent be attributed to the buyout, tobacco is still the leading agronomic cash crop in the county accounting for \$ \$38,052,350 or 49 percent of gross sales attributable to field crops in 2008 (1998 & 2008 WCGFSE). Comparatively, from 2002 to 2007 the number of tobacco farmers decreased from 208 to 108. From 2002 to 2008 total sales of flue-cured tobacco increased from \$23,023,000 to \$38,052,350 respectively (Figure 4).

The buyout has resulted in fewer tobacco farmers, but larger farms and greater efficiency. Efficiency is crucial to profitability, as is quality. Tobacco has transitioned into a contractual marketing system much like the swine and poultry industry. The contractual nature of the existing system has resulted in companies' relying on those farmers who are efficient and can produce a consistent quality of leaf. The impact of the buyout and resultant impact to income from tobacco to the county has been positive in Wayne County. The dollar value attributed to tobacco in 1998 was reported as \$32,999,030 and in 2008 as \$38,052,350, which represents a 13 percent increase in gross sales attributable to tobacco, most probably because of increased efficiency. Wayne County ranks third in tobacco production in the state and nation (2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture and 1998 & 2008 WCGFSE).

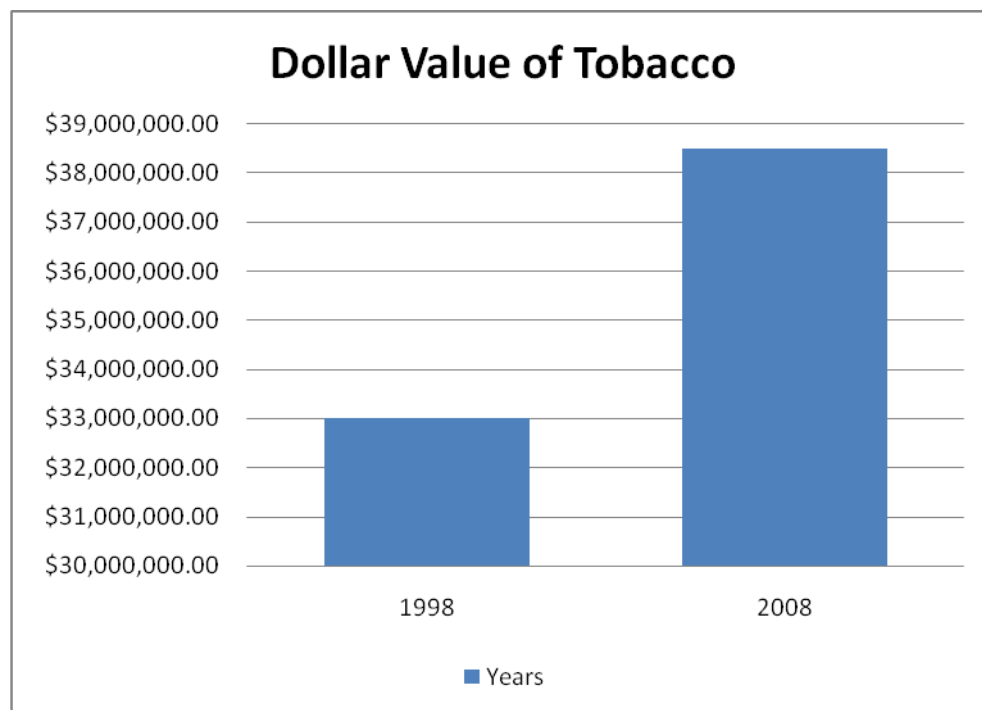


Figure 4. Dollar Value of Tobacco in Wayne County

Grain crops of wheat, soybeans and corn are important to farm income and crop rotation in the county. The county ranks 3rd in wheat production, 6th in corn production, and 7th in soybean production statewide (2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture).

Figures 5, 6, 7 denote the impact of other commodities on income to the county. Gross farm sales of corn over the past decade have increased markedly (74 percent). This increase may be attributed to higher commodity prices as a result of additional pressures on the commodity ranging from ethanol production, to drought, to reduced supply.

Income from the sale of wheat is even more notable (216 percent) as wheat was more commonly double-cropped in 2008 and prices also have increased over the past few years. Soybean income increases (32 percent) are noted in Wayne County from increased sales following other commodity trends.

Environmental, market and supply fluctuations account for variations in these trends over the past decade. As farm numbers continue to decline, continued increases in gross farm sales are imperative to the continued viability of remaining farms and the continued economic strength of the county. As input costs continue to rise, profit margins are impacted. Policies and programs cognizant of farm issues and geared toward farmland preservation may assist in keeping these profit margins practical for farmers to remain in production.

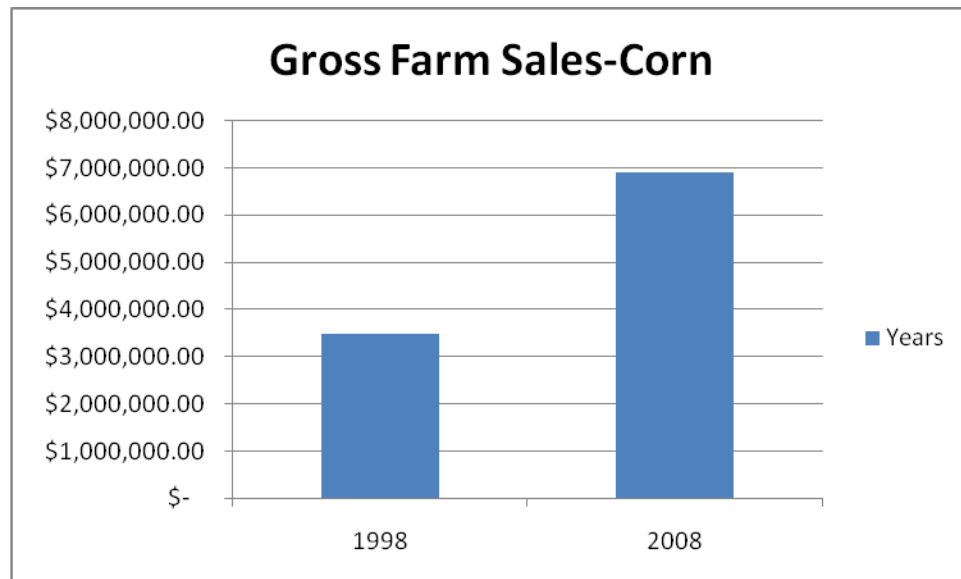


Figure 5. Gross Farm Sales – Corn

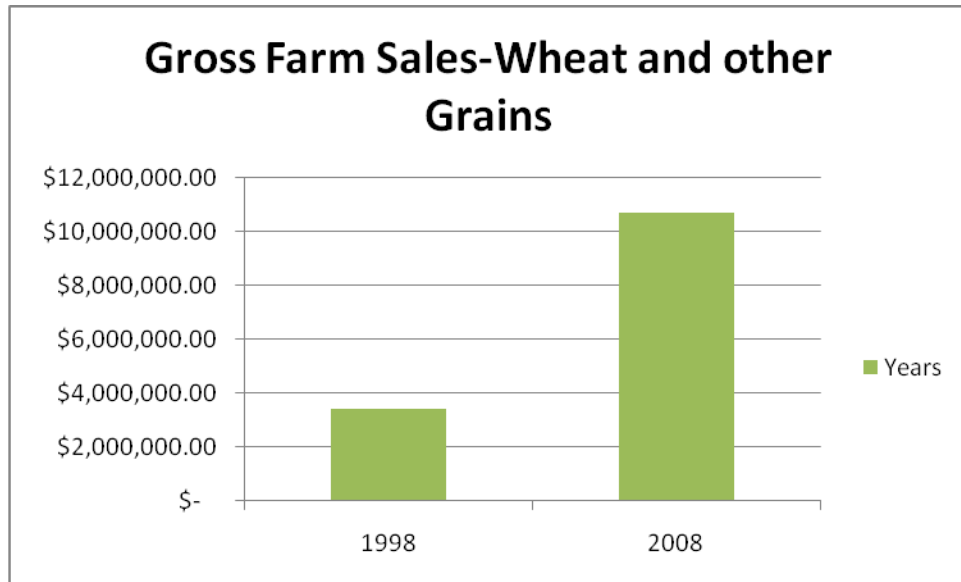


Figure 6. Gross Farm Sales – Wheat and Grain

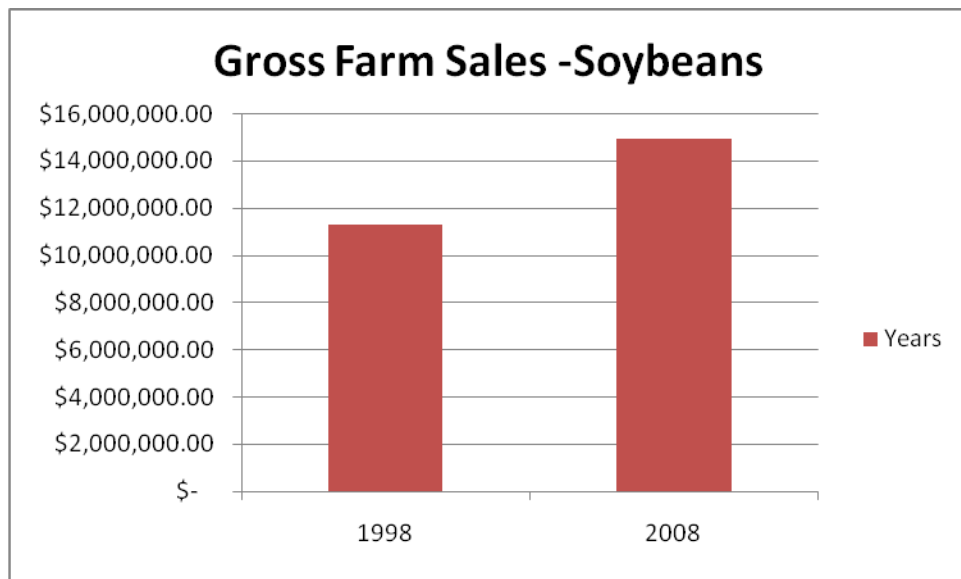


Figure 7. Gross Farm Sales – Soybeans

Livestock production is responsible for a large portion of the agricultural economy of Wayne County. Primary livestock operations are contract swine and poultry operations with vertical integrators. According to the 2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture, Wayne County ranks 3rd in the state in the sale of hogs and third in the state in turkey production. Additionally, Wayne County's diversity in agriculture affords the county a ranking of 3rd in the state in the value of sales of sheep, goats and their products (2007 Census of Agriculture). Figure 8 represents the total income resultant from livestock in Wayne County.

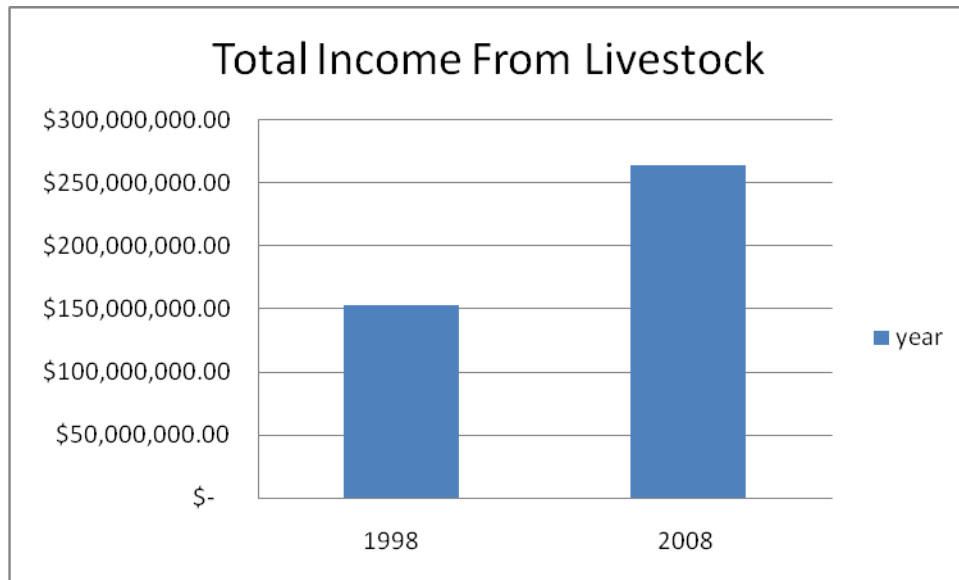


Figure 8. Total Income From Livestock in Wayne County

Horticultural crops are an important source of revenue with \$15,179,825 in sales (WCGFSE 2008). While currently contributing a significant portion to the agricultural economy, direct markets and other innovative market options make the potential growth in the production of horticultural crops a prospective opportunity for farmers in Wayne County. A focus on market development coupled with the expectation for continued population growth could markedly increase growth potential for commercial horticulture as well as ornamental horticulture enterprises.

Wayne County has 141,600 acres of forest with annual timber sales of \$26,000,000. Private ownership accounts for 137,000 acres of forestland (Appendix B, Figure 6). The Forest Service works hard on reforestation and other best management practices. However, budget reductions have increased the acreage of harvested tracts that are not able to be replanted. In many cases, this leaves large acreages of cleared land with no apparent value, making them available for development (Wayne County Forest Service). Approximately one-half of the privately owned forest acreage is managed under certified management plans. The remaining 4,600 acres of the county's total forested acreage is owned by the state.

The county is home to several large agribusiness enterprises: Mount Olive Pickle, Franklin Baking Company, Case Farms and Goldsboro Milling. Agricultural employment in farming and agribusiness contributes 11,503 jobs or 20.4 percent of total employment (IMPLAN, Mig, Inc. reported by N.C. State University, 2008). The Wayne County Alliance reports that five of the top six employers in Wayne County are agribusinesses. They are Goldsboro Milling, Case Farms, Mount Olive Pickles, Georgia Pacific and Franklin Baking. (Wayne County Alliance, 2008).

Farms also provide tax revenue to local government. In 2002, the average value of farm land, buildings and equipment was reported to be \$850,000. In a cost of community services study conducted for Franklin County, N.C., (Renkow), it is reported that farm land and forest land in Franklin County generate \$1.32 in revenue for every \$1 received in community services. Similar

studies in various N.C. counties indicate that working lands generate more revenue than the cost of community services received. Farms and forests compare more closely to commercial/industrial in cost of community services in other counties studied and reported (2008 Annual Report NCADFP). This factor should serve to encourage local governments to consider incentives for farmland preservation similar to those considered for commercial/industrial development especially when the employment factor of 20.4 percent attributable to agriculture/agribusiness is considered.

Wayne County Agricultural Land Base and Resources

Wayne County is located in the Atlantic Coastal Plain physiographic province. Elevation ranges from about 40 feet above sea level in the east to 190 feet in the southwestern part of the county. The soils of Wayne County are acid and strongly leached. They are mostly low to very low in natural fertility. Organic matter content is also low to very low. Wayne County has seven soil associations:

1. Norfolk-Goldsboro-Aycock comprises 37 percent of the county land and is moderate to well drained. This association is well suited to all locally grown crops including tobacco, corn, soybeans, small grains and vegetables.
2. Wagram-Kenansville comprises 20 percent of the county and is well drained. This association is well suited for all locally cultivated crops.
3. Lakeland-Troup comprises 10 percent of the county land and is excessively drained to well-drained. Majority of this association is wooded with longleaf pine and turkey oak. The chief hazards that limit crop productivity are very low fertility, very low available water capacity and soil blowing.
4. Rains-Torhunta-Liddell comprises 15 percent of the county and is poorly drained with nearly level soils. The major crop is loblolly pine with the remainder used for corn, soybeans and pasture.
5. A Wickham-Johns association only makes up 5 percent of the county and is somewhat poorly drained. Most of this association is cultivated when properly drained, and the rest is in loblolly pines and mixed hardwoods.
6. Johnston-Chewacla-Kinston makes up 8 percent of the county and is very poorly drained to somewhat poorly drain. This association is wooded with mixed hardwoods. When flooding is controlled, this type is well suited for corn and soybean production.
7. Lumbee-Torhunta association is very poorly drained and makes up 5 percent of the county. Most of this type is wooded with loblolly pine and mixed hardwoods. It can be cultivated if it is artificially drained (Wayne County, North Carolina Soil Survey June 1974).

Eighty-two percent of the soil associations denoted for Wayne County are suitable for agricultural use. The remaining 18 percent of the associations are suitable for forest production and or cultivation when drained. Like much of Eastern North Carolina, Wayne County is suited to agriculture. The soils and their inherent characteristics make the landscape a profitable asset from a natural resource perspective. This makes the planning for growth even more crucial to preserve farmland while affording for growth residentially and commercially.

Farmland Protection Plans

Present-Use Value Tax Program – Present-Use Value, or PUV, is a program established by N.C.G.S. §§ 105-277.2 to .7 and administered by the county tax assessor through which qualifying property can be assessed, for property tax purposes, based on its use as agricultural, horticultural or forest land. The present-use value is the value of the land based solely on its ability to produce income. Qualifying property is assessed at its present-use value rather than its market value. The tax office also maintains a market value for the land, and the difference between the market value and the present-use value is maintained in the tax records as deferred taxes. When land becomes disqualified from the program, the deferred taxes for the current and three previous years with interest will usually become payable and due.

Basic Requirements

- Minimum acreage of production land:
 - 10 acres for agricultural use
 - 5 acres for horticulture use
 - 20 acres for forest use.
- Production must follow a sound management plan, which means a program of production designed to obtain the greatest net return from the land.
- Agricultural and horticultural land must have at least one qualifying tract that has produced an average gross income of at least \$1,000 for the three years prior to the application year.
- Forest land must be following a forest management plan but does not have income requirements.

Benefits

- Protection from increasing land values that are based on development potential and the potential increase in property taxes.

More information can be found at <http://www.dor.state.nc.us/publications/property.html>

This program remains a tremendously important tool for farmers and landowners to utilize in keeping valuable land in production. Additional education is needed for property heirs and for forest landowners to be certain of its utility when requirements are met. Programs of this nature allow landowners to continue to lease land allowing income from the property while providing land to farmers at an affordable rental rate. Many families owning the land would be unable to keep the land if unable to lease. Concurrently, farmers are reporting that one of their greatest challenges is a lack of available land to lease or buy for production agriculture.

Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VAD) – Established by N.C.G.S. §§ 106-735 through 106- 744 and Chapter 153A North Carolina General Statutes and administered at the county level. Voluntary Agricultural Districts are designated areas where commercial agriculture will be encouraged and protected. The purpose of this is to promote agricultural values and the general welfare of the county and more specifically, to increase identity and pride in the agricultural community and its way of life, and encourage the economic and financial health of

agriculture and forestry. The ordinance provides protection from non-farm development and other negative impacts on properly managed farms.

Basic Requirements

Wayne County is divided into six regions as defined below:

1. Great Swamp, Buck Swamp, Fork townships
2. Nahunta, Pikeville, Stoney Creek townships
3. Goldsboro, Saulston, New Hope townships
4. Indian Springs Township
5. Brogden Township
6. Grantham Township

In order to implement the purposes stated in the VAD ordinance, this program provides for the creation of voluntary agricultural districts, which meet the following standards:

1. The District when initially established shall contain a minimum of 100 contiguous acres of qualified farmland; or shall contain three or more qualified tracts of land within one-half miles of each other which contain a total of at least 100 acres.
2. The county tax office identifies the tract(s) of land as agriculture. All land enrolled in a region, defined in Section A, above, shall be part of a single district. If a single farm has acreage in two or more regions, the farm shall participate in the district where the largest acreage is found. Land must be enrolled in the Present-Use Value program and identified by the tax office as farm land

Benefits

- Notification to buyers of nearby property that they're moving into an agricultural area.
- Abeyance of water and sewer assessments.
- Public hearings on the condemnation of farmland.
- Stronger protection from nuisance suits.
- Representation by an appointed board regarding concerns on threats to the agricultural sector. (Wayne County Voluntary Ag District Ordinance)

Current enrollment in the Wayne County Voluntary Agricultural District Program is 265 tracts of land representing 12,088 acres as noted on the VAD map (Appendix B, Figure 4). This program has grown each year and is expected to continue to grow. Although the current economic climate has periodically reduced some development pressure, the continuation of improved infrastructure and transportation routes countywide exemplifies the need for continued education and subsequent enrollment.

Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts – Established by N.C.G.S §§ 106-743.1 to .5, an Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District is a VAD formed of one or more farms that are subject to an IRREVOCABLE 10-year agreement to limit development. In return for the condition of irrevocability the landowner receives the added benefits of being able to receive 25 percent of gross revenue from the sale of nonfarm products and still qualify as a bona fide farm, and being eligible to receive up to 90 percent cost-share assistance from the Agricultural Cost

Share Program. Currently Wayne County does not have an Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District program.

Conservation Easements – A conservation easement is a written agreement between a landowner and a qualified conservation organization or public agency under which the landowner agrees to keep the land available for agriculture and to restrict subdivision, non-farm development and other uses that are incompatible with commercial agriculture.

Basic Requirements

- Permanently foregoing the right to subdivide or develop the land being conserved. There will be other limitations on activities to preserve the land's productivity, environmental values and rural character.
- Cash payments in the range of \$20,000 to \$40,000 are needed to cover the costs of the transaction. These costs are for legal services, a survey, an appraisal, long-term stewardship services provided by the conservation partner and other miscellaneous activities. In some cases grant funds will cover these costs.
- Other Information
 - A portion of the property can be left out of the easement, thereby providing an area for future homes and other non-farm activities.
 - Agricultural activities, including forestry, are allowed under the agreement.
 - Despite the term "easement" access to the public is not provided by the agreement.
 - The value of a conservation easement is determined by a licensed land appraiser and is typically between 25 percent and 75 percent of the land's market value.
 - A periodic inspection of the property is required to ensure that development does not occur. This provision will be included in the agreement.
 - The agreement is recorded on the county's land records and runs with the title. All future landowners must comply with the terms and conditions of the agreement.
- Financial Benefits
 - If the conservation easement is donated then the landowner will likely qualify for a federal income tax deduction and a state income tax credit. The value of these benefits depends on the appraised value of the easement and the income tax situation of the landowner.
 - A conservation easement can also be sold by the landowner through a transaction commonly referred to as a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) or Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE). Funds to purchase a conservation easement can be raised from private and government sources. North Carolina and the federal government have programs to purchase agricultural conservation easements. Funding through these programs is very competitive and will generally amount to a percentage of the easement's value. The tax benefits described above can be claimed for any of the easement's value above the purchase price.

Term Conservation Easements – Also called Agricultural Agreements, these agreements are similar to conservation easements but apply for a finite period of time agreed to by the landowner and conservation partner.

Transfer of Development Rights – A program set up by local units of governments that utilize conservation easements to preserve farmland by providing incentives to increase development density in designated areas. The program identifies the "sending area" where conservation is

being encouraged and the “receiving area” where development is preferred. A landowner in the receiving area can purchase a conservation easement on a property in the sending area and receive additional density allowances. In North Carolina, counties must receive authorization from the General Assembly to develop and implement a TDR program.

Farm Transition Planning – Making careful plans for the transfer of ownership of farm property and assets from the current owner to the next can be enough to preserve a farm for decades. Many options are available when planning an estate or land transfer. Farm owners can increase the likelihood of a successful transition that maintains the viability of the farm by obtaining professional assistance early in the process. The N.C. Farm Transition Network provides educational and technical resources to professionals and landowners. Currently transition planning is not utilized in Wayne County. There is a need due to aging farmers and no definite plans for transition.

Right-to-Farm Law – North Carolina has a right-to-farm law (N.C.G.S. §§ 106-700 to 701(2006)) that protects farm and forestry operations from being declared a nuisance as long as they have been in operation for at least one year and are operated properly and without negligence.

N.C. Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund – N.C.G.S. § 106-744(c) established a trust fund to be administered by the commissioner of agriculture. The purpose of the trust fund is to provide monies to purchase agricultural conservation easements and to fund programs that promote the development and sustainability of farming and the transition of existing farms to new farm families. Counties and nonprofit conservation organizations can apply for grants for these purposes. The N.C. General Assembly appropriated \$8 million to the trust fund for the 2008 fiscal year and \$4 million for the 2009 fiscal year (John Bonham, Hoke County 2009).

Challenges, Opportunities and Trends: Survey and Interview Results

Information acquired from target audiences – agribusiness, agricultural producers and non-farm residents – revealed a number of challenges and opportunities for Wayne County farmers and their efforts to maintain working family farms. Education is the key to addressing both the challenges and opportunities that are current and are expected for the future of agriculture in Wayne County.

Opportunities exist to better position farmers to utilize tools available to them. Farmers must become educated on the various farmland preservation tools that are currently in place with local and state government. Additional opportunities exist for a rather large percentage of farmers, farm landowners and timber landowners to enroll in the present-use taxation program. Information on existing farmland preservation tools, easements and taxation do provide challenges to farmers and land owners to stay abreast; however, organizations do exist that can provide the needed information. To retain funding and support of these organizations is crucial to education for landowners. Additionally, forest landowners must often have a certified management plan in place to include this acreage in present-use tax programs and other opportunities. Monetary challenges may exist for forest landowners to afford consultants to construct plans and/or for organizations such as the Forest Service to provide due to ever-increasing budget constraints.

Wayne County has an active Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) Program, which provides awareness and other benefits to those enrolled. Continued education as to the benefits of the VAD program is important as is the encouragement, education and adoption of the Enhanced Voluntary Agriculture Districts (EVAD), which will be available in Wayne County in 2010. Other programs that provide financial incentive and preserve farmland for the future are viable options for farmers desiring to preserve the farm for perpetuity or limited terms. These programs are permanent or term conservation easements, Transfer of Development Rights and utilization of the grants from the Farmland Preservation Trust Fund.

Agribusinesses and farmers both need to actively participate in efforts to educate local, state and national leaders on the vital importance of agriculture to the economy and the environment. Audiences of grave importance to the future of agriculture in Wayne County are non-farmers and youth. Farmers and agribusiness need to provide opportunities to tell their story to all citizens. A major challenge faced is the need to expose youth to all aspects of agriculture from production to distribution of products and the career opportunities that are available.

Farm transition is an additional challenge and opportunity and is of extreme importance to the future of family farms in Wayne County. Opportunities need to be made available for farmers at the local level to learn about estate planning and how to develop a transition plan that fits their operation and family. There is vast evidence of little if any information to assist farmers in personal financial and estate planning other than those obtained by farmers individually.

Opportunity exists to encourage the viable evolution of farm families from one generation to another and the opportunity for organizations and institutions within the county to provide the necessary educational programs. As the farm population continues to age this becomes an area that is critical to the generational transition of agriculture.

With the increased cost of agronomic inputs, diversification and adding value to products is essential. The development and diversification of new and existing market channels is required if the next generation is to pursue careers in agriculture. Growth evidenced in Wayne County while offering challenges to the future of farm families also offers unlimited opportunities for these same working farms. The potential for additional market channels is evidenced by information gathered through this effort. Direct markets, niche markets as well as value-added markets while available, remain untapped by the vast majority of producers in Wayne County. Knowledge of market development at the farm level is needed and the support by local governments of marketing campaigns and local as well as potential institutional market development are necessary to embrace these additional marketing opportunities afforded farmers in Wayne County. Profit maximization, marketing techniques, cooperatives, buying groups, agri-tourism and energy farming are all areas designated as of interest to farmers in Wayne County. Challenges exist for local government and institutions/agencies to provide the educational foundation to assist farmers in developing these new opportunities. .

The key to the future of farming lies with a well informed citizenry that demands that government protect and promote farming and agribusiness. Farmers, agribusiness and agriculture leaders need to take every opportunity to educate citizens on the importance of agriculture and agribusiness to Wayne County. Citizens surveyed believed farming to be an asset to the county economically and environmentally. Leaders need to capitalize on the opportunities that will ensure continued economic viability through agriculture for the future of Wayne County. Information herein substantiates the opportunities, challenges and trends that afford the future of Wayne County agriculture.

Three surveys were conducted in the late winter and early spring of 2009 to collect data and opinions on Wayne County agriculture. The survey instruments were disbursed by the N.C. Cooperative Extension, Wayne County Center staff to target audiences - farmers, agribusiness and citizens (Appendix A). The extension office received 257 completed surveys. In addition to the distribution of surveys, personal interviews were conducted within all three target audiences. These interviews were directed to non-survey respondents and leaders in each target group. More than 60 percent of harvested crop acreage was represented in farmer surveys and interviews. Agribusinesses representing greater than 50 percent of the employment in the county were contacted by virtue of these instruments or interviews. Twenty municipalities and townships were represented in the survey results providing widespread submission by the citizenry of the county. All descriptive statistics contained in this document were calculated using data obtained through these processes. Following are survey and interview data from the three groups. Additionally, an overview of the population demographics as well as the challenges, opportunities and trends related to each are provided.

Agribusiness Responses (Survey in Appendix C)

- Majority of respondents have been in the farm supply business more than 10 years.

- 100 percent recognized farmers as their most valuable customers.
- Two-thirds said that more than 50 percent of their business comes from Wayne County.
- Agricultural trends observed include: farm operations are more sophisticated, larger, more diversified and beginning to utilize specialty and direct markets.
- 100 percent support local government funding for Farmland Preservation.
- 100 percent support disaster relief payments, conservation cost share, right-to-farm laws, agriculture district maintenance and expansion and purchase of development rights.
- 100 percent of the respondents believe that consumers' buying local and youth and farm neighbor educational programs were very important to farmland preservation.

Follow-up face-to-face interviews were conducted with agribusiness leaders in Wayne County. They identified challenges facing agriculture.

- Availability of a dependable and trained work force
- Input cost
- Water supply and discharge
- Development pressure on land
- Lack of political leadership for agriculture
- Environmental regulations, animal rights and labor. Need compliance with current regulations not more regulations enacted. Environmental regulations will not allow U.S. to compete in global market place.
- Lack of youth interested or engaged in agriculture
- Believe in the importance of government programs that enable agriculture to remain profitable

Implications

Agribusiness leaders clearly realize the importance of a viable agricultural sector in Wayne County to the economy, environment and general well-being of all citizens. There is support for government funding of farmland preservation tools and programs. Education is viewed as a key tool in preserving and enhancing agriculture in the future. Educational programs need to be developed to engaged youth in agricultural production or processing careers. Agricultural business leaders also recognize the need to re-establish political ties on all levels of government. Politicians need to be educated on the importance of agriculture and programs that will continue to help it expand.

Farmer Responses (Survey in Appendix C)

- Average age of farmer respondents - 49 years old
- 65 percent intend to farm for another 10 years, and 84 percent plan to transfer the farm operation to family members.
- 55 percent of the operations remained the same size or decreased over the past five years.
- 71 percent of respondents were full-time farmers, and 75 percent have been farming more than 20 years.
- 63 percent have spouses who provide income from off the farm.
- 71 percent have other family members involved in the farm operation.
- Increased farm profitability would most help farmers keep land in production (54 percent).

- 87 percent are negatively impacted by environmental and other regulations.
- Only 29 percent have experienced neighbor problems concerning farm operations, and the complaints were focused on manure application (20 percent), chemical use (19 percent), littering (16 percent) and slow moving vehicles (16 percent).
- For 41 percent of farmers surveyed, the primary reason for not expanding their operation was lack of available land to rent or purchase. Sixty-five percent did not own sufficient land to expand.
- The majority did not utilize alternative enterprises to increase revenue such as leasing land for utilities, mining and recreational activities.
- 74 percent regularly seek information from the N.C. Cooperative Extension.
- The majority are not aware of tax credits, grants and loans for renewable energy, agriculture and farmland preservation funds, historic preservation tax credit and conservation tax credit.
- 73 percent did not have their farm under the Voluntary Agriculture District Program.
- 63 percent were aware of the Enhanced Voluntary Agriculture District Program.
- 78 percent of the respondent farmers sell products through auction or to a broker, dealer or third party.
- The most important government programs to farmers are right to farm (99 percent), disaster relief payments (99 percent) and farm land values (98 percent).
- Farmers need training on pesticide management (61 percent), on farm bio-security (52 percent) and on securing migrant and other labor (50 percent).
- Farmers rated youth agricultural education (83 percent) and farm neighbor education (80 percent) as the top two marketing and consumer awareness programs.
- The top three farm management and tax issues for farmers were reducing health care costs (84 percent), capital gains and estate tax reform (83 percent) and income tax reform (78 percent).

Row crop and livestock farmers were interviewed to obtain a more in-depth perspective of farming in Wayne County. They shared the following challenges and opportunities facing Wayne County agriculture, which paralleled the farmer survey results.

Farmer Challenges

- Increasing input cost (fertilizer, seeds, fuel and feed)
- Competition for land resulting in increased lease rates and purchase prices
- Farm transition plans from generation to generation
- Increased environmental and labor regulations, which cut profitability and require time-consuming recordkeeping
- Labor availability, cost, retention and legality
- County infrastructure – sewer and water availability allows people to build houses anywhere resulting in urban pressure for land
- Lack of education about farming and what it entails especially among African Americans
- The image of farming that farmers are always broke and work 24/7 is a deterrent to youth who might emulate to be agricultural producers
- The viable future of integrated farm enterprises

Farmer Opportunities

- Diversification
- Carbon farming
- Present-use value taxation
- Forest management plans
- Incentives to entice landowners to keep land in farm production
- Education of youth and adults about farming
- Market diversification

Implications

The major implication drawn from the survey and interview data is that farmers need an array of tools to maintain and expand their operations. They need assistance from government at all levels to preserve agriculture as an economic engine in Wayne County. Farmers need to be educated about the value of voluntary agriculture districts, tax credits, farm transition procedures/options and available grants. They strongly believe in the importance of youth agricultural education. They realize that farming is not attracting young people because of the perceived opinion that farming is not profitable. There is a need for a series of educational programs to acquaint youth with farming and its benefits. With the average age of farmers at 55 (2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture) there is a dire need for education and awareness of farm transition options, the nuts and bolts of estate planning and taxation. Farmers need additional training on value-added enterprises that will generate additional revenue for the farm such as agricultural tourism, recreation and new crop options.

Non-Farm Responses (Survey in Appendix C)

- 77 percent of respondents were 50 years or older, 75 percent have lived in Wayne County 20 or more years, and 64 percent have a bachelor of science or higher degree.
- 76 percent of respondents lived within a quarter mile of a farm, and 97 percent stated that farmers are good neighbors.
- 86 percent view agriculture as having potential for future growth.
- 93 percent felt Wayne County government should take steps to help preserve farmland and encourage farmers to expand.
- 87 percent felt loans and grants to develop farm enterprises are important.
- Only 48 percent accurately recognize the impact of agriculture to Wayne County's economy.
- 73 percent of respondents purchase products from fruit and vegetable stands, and 43 percent utilize U-Pick operations.
- In regard to experiencing problems with a farm neighbors, the number-one problem was odors (30 percent), and the number-two problem was slow moving vehicles (21 percent).
- 95 percent believe farming enhances scenic beauty of Wayne County.
- 93 percent believe farming enhances open spaces in Wayne County.
- 88 percent believe farming is a positive asset to the environment.
- 78 percent believe farmers are paid too little for their products and labor.
- 87 percent believe farmers deliver high quality products.
- 79 percent believe farmers should receive tax breaks for their operations.
- 55 percent believe agriculture is a good career path for youth.

- Even in today's economy, 50 percent support local government funding for farmland preservation.

Implications

The data reveals that non-farm residents (Wayne County citizens) overwhelmingly believe that farming is an environmental and economic asset to the county and should be preserved. Citizens support government funding of farmland preservation. They believe farming has a viable future in the county and is still a good career path for youth.

Recommendations

Wayne County farmland is an irreplaceable natural resource, and the farmers, who are the stewards of the land, are extremely important to the county's total economy and quality of life for all citizens. According to non-farm residents, agriculture provides scenic beauty, open spaces and is a positive asset to the environment. The fact that the general citizenry recognizes the inherent value of agriculture to the county makes it even more important that all reasonable efforts are used to keep agriculture a viable component of the county.

These recommendations will only be effective if the county leadership and agencies follow through with support and action. Following are recommendations that can be utilized to promote and enhance agriculture in the future.

1. Encourage Wayne County Commissioners to consider using sales tax options instead of raising property taxes when increased revenue is required, and encourage Wayne County government to solicit the North Carolina General Assembly to research property tax versus sales tax as a funding stream for counties. This action would result in reducing the burden of taxation on farmland.

Supporting Documentation:

Seventy-eight percent of farmers responding to the producer survey indicated that property tax rates were only second to the reduction of input costs when asked what was the most important factor they faced in keeping their land in agriculture. Seventy-nine percent of non-farm residents surveyed indicated that they recognized the importance of tax breaks to farmers and supported continued opportunities.

Implementation Period:

2010 legislative session.

Action Step:

- Begin dialogue on the issue with county's legislative representatives.

Responsible Parties:

County manager, board of commissioners, Wayne County Farm Bureau

2. Create an awareness campaign that will educate local leaders and citizens on the value of agriculture to the county.

Supporting Documentation:

Less than 50 percent of non-farm resident respondents accurately reported the importance of agriculture to the county's economy. A comprehensive and well-planned educational program on Wayne County agriculture (agribusiness and farming) will produce better relations and understanding of the impact and needs of agriculture.

Implementation Period:

Late Fall 2009 and continuing

Action Steps:

- Plan and conduct local government leaders' tour of Wayne County's diverse farm and agribusiness operations.
- Hold rotating town hall forums on agricultural issues with municipal officials.
- Develop a strategic plan that depicts the role of agriculture in Wayne County that can be used to educate civic, school and religious organizations.
- Support new and existing awareness programs including, but not limited to: Wayne County's Agricultural Marketing Effort "We Dig It"

Responsible Parties:

Chamber of Commerce, N.C. Cooperative Extension, Karl Best Agricultural Leadership graduates, Goldsboro and Wayne County Travel and Tourism, Wayne County Farm Bureau, Wayne County Livestock Development Association, Wayne County Grange, Wayne County Soil and Water Conservation District board and Wayne County Forest Service

3. Develop and promote a comprehensive youth Agricultural Leadership Development Program.

Supporting Documentation:

Farmers (83 percent), agribusiness owners (100 percent) and non-farm residents (55 percent) all rated youth education as an important component of a plan to preserve farmland for the future in Wayne County.

Implementation Period:

Spring 2010 and continuing

Action Steps:

- Encourage youth to actively participate in agricultural organizations such as FFA, 4-H, Collegiate FFA
- Plan Youth Leadership Institute for selected high school and college students from across the county that focuses on issues, careers, economics, challenges and opportunities facing agriculture.
- Support the promotion and implementation of Ag in the Classroom for elementary students.
- Develop a farm and agribusiness mentoring program that provides interested high school and college students the opportunity to receive hands-on learning experiences on farming and agribusiness.

Responsible Parties:

Wayne County Farm Bureau, Wayne County Public School System, Mount Olive College Agribusiness Center, Wayne Community College, Chamber of Commerce, N.C. Cooperative Extension, Center for Environmental Farming Systems and Wayne County Grange

4. Make needed technical and business training readily available for existing and new farmers through a variety of delivery modes that best fit the farmers' schedules and learning styles.

Supporting Documentation:

Farmers indicated a need for a number of technical training areas that include but are not limited to pesticide management (61 percent); farm bio-security (52 percent), estate planning/farm transfer (62 percent) and other topics including taxation, the environment, energy, market diversification and value-added revenue sources.

Implementation Period:

Fall 2010 and Continuing

Action Steps:

- Develop training on topics such as computerized record-keeping, water quality, farmland preservation tools, tax credits, value-added products and farm transition.
- Educate farmers on new farm revenue opportunities, carbon credits, energy production and leasing of land for recreation and hunting.

Responsible Parties:

Wayne Community College, Mt. Olive College Agribusiness Center, N.C Cooperative Extension, Wayne County Soil and Water Conservation District board, N.C. State University and Wayne County Farm Bureau

5. Educate farmers, landowners and non-farm residents on available farmland preservation tools.

Supporting Documentation:

Only 23 percent of the farmers surveyed have enrolled land in the Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VAD). Additionally, 51 percent of farmers surveyed were not aware of the Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund and its potential uses and benefits or of the present-use tax valuation program.

Implementation Period:

Winter 2011 and Continuing.

Action Steps:

- Design a marketing plan using all media outlets to educate farmers and landowners on the value of VAD and Enhanced VAD.
- Develop a presentation on the benefits of forest management plans for small woodlot owners and conduct a series of educational programs.
- Educate landowners about different tax options on timberland and the present-use tax value program.
- Research Good Farm Neighbor programs that could be adapted to Wayne County.

Responsible Parties:

Voluntary Agriculture District Advisory Board, N.C. Forest Service, N.C. Cooperative Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Mount Olive College Agribusiness Center and Wayne Community College

6. Develop an Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District Ordinance for Wayne County.

Supporting Documentation:

Sixty-three percent of farmers responding indicated an awareness of the Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District (EVAD) program. While acreage increases have occurred in the existing VAD program in Wayne County, the EVAD program offers greater benefit to farmers who elect to enroll.

Implementation Period:

Fall 2010

Action Steps:

- Adopt an EVAD ordinance.
- Develop a series of educational sessions to inform farmers of the advantages of enlisting in the VAD and EVAD programs.

Responsible Parties:

VAD Advisory Board, Wayne County Farm Bureau, N.C. Cooperative Extension, Wayne County Soil and Water Conservation District Board and Wayne County Planning Department

7. Engage local and government organizations in preserving, supporting and promoting farming and agribusiness in Wayne County.

Supporting Documentation:

Eighty-seven percent of non-farm residents of Wayne County participating in the survey expressed that farming should be encouraged in Wayne County with that same percentage supporting loans, grants and other avenues to encourage continued agricultural growth in the county. Over 90 percent of these same respondents expressed that farming was of benefit to the citizenry of Wayne County by its value to scenic beauty, open space and quality of life.

Implementation Period:

Immediately after adoption of Wayne County Farmland Preservation Plan.

Action Steps:

- Investigate opportunities on how the Wayne County Development Alliance and the Chamber of Commerce can assist agribusinesses in marketing and business development.
- Encourage the Chamber of Commerce to provide services conducive to farmer membership.

- Begin preliminary discussion of a public/private funding partnership of farmland preservation programs with local government, the public and the local business sector.

Responsible Parties:

Chamber of Commerce, county manager, Wayne Economic Development Alliance and N.C. Cooperative Extension

8. Encourage local government officials and planners to inform the VAD Advisory Board of proposed infrastructure activities affecting agricultural enterprises.

Supporting Documentation:

Rural and urban interfaces continue to increase with growth in Wayne County. An agricultural impact assessment should be used to inform landowners of potential adverse impacts of infrastructure placement and to encourage dialogue to minimize negative impacts when alternatives exist. When asked to rate perceived support for the agricultural industry in Wayne County, farmers responding found local government to be somewhat supportive. It is believed that improved communication would assist local governments and farmers in planning for growth and the retention of economic growth opportunities.

Implementation Period:

Immediately after adoption of Wayne County Farmland Preservation Plan.

Action Steps:

- Devise an information channel between local governments and VAD Advisory Board on proposed infrastructure projects impacting farmland.

Responsible Parties:

VAD Advisory Board, county commissioners, county manager, county planning department and other local governments

9. Support an agricultural marketing position to coordinate the growing needs of a diversified farming community.

Supporting Documentation:

Trends exposed through this study indicate that agriculture in Wayne County is growing. New, small, part-time farmers producing specialty niche crops continue to develop direct markets. However, to meet consumer demands for fresh local products, direct market options must be developed. More than 80 percent of farmers responding indicate the need for market development and training. Concurrently, 84 percent of non-farm residents responding indicated they would pay more for products grown in Wayne County. Development of marketing channels to meet the demands of consumers while enhancing the economic stability of the county is imperative.

Implementation Period:

Fall of 2010 and continuing

Action Steps:

- Support a part-time agricultural marketing position.
- Create an atmosphere for value-added niche markets and a network through which to recruit and educate existing and potential producers.
- Develop new diversified direct marketing channels.

Responsible Parties:

Board of commissioners, county manager, City of Goldsboro, N.C. Cooperative Extension and Center for Environmental Farming Systems

10. Support a Wayne County Cost of Community Services study.

Supporting Documentation:

This study would act as an inexpensive and reliable tool to measure the fiscal relationships between existing and proposed land uses in the county. Numerous studies are emerging across the state comparing the cost of community services for residential, commercial/industrial and farms/forests; however, these studies have not been published for counties in eastern North Carolina. With 20.4 percent of employment in the county attributable to agriculture/agribusiness and with agriculture remaining the number-one industry, this study would further clarify the comparative impact of agriculture to competing uses.

Implementation Period:

Fall of 2010

Action Steps:

- Work with Mount Olive College to produce a Cost of Community Services study

Responsible Parties:

Board of Commissioners, county manager, N.C. Cooperative Extension, Mount Olive College
Lois G. Britt Agribusiness Center

Conclusion

Wayne County is fortunate to possess a diverse and profitable agricultural sector that adds tremendously to the quality of life for all citizens. Agriculture is a viable economic engine that produces more than \$388 million in farm gate receipts each year. Farming and agribusiness contribute almost 22 percent of the total county economy. According to a study by Renkow, agriculture generates \$1.32 for every dollar in government services. But of even greater importance, agriculture provides needed open spaces, wildlife habitat, green spaces and recreational opportunities.

Agriculture in Wayne County is being challenged by urbanization, changing markets and lack of understanding by citizens removed from the farm. Now is the time for local government, working through its agencies, to partner with farmers to actively preserve farmland, research new value-added markets and educate the public on the importance of agriculture. This plan has recommendations that are meant to enhance the future of agriculture in the county.

The county has an excellent cadre of organizations and agencies that, working cooperatively, can positively impact farming and rural life: N.C. Cooperative Extension, N.C. State University, Natural Resources Conservation Services, Voluntary Agriculture District Advisory Board, Chamber of Commerce, Mount Olive College's Lois Britt Agribusiness Center, Wayne Community College, Center for Environmental Farming Systems, Wayne County Soil and Water Conservation District, Wayne County Forestry Service, Wayne County Farm Bureau, Wayne County Livestock Development Association and Wayne County Grange.

In order for this plan to be viable and cutting edge, it needs to be evaluated annually by local government. An annual update will ensure that recommendations are being accomplished and that new ones are being added as the need arises. The writers of this plan believe that strategic planning within and of itself is a valuable tool for farmland and farming preservation.

Appendix A: Literature Cited

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Appendix B: Maps

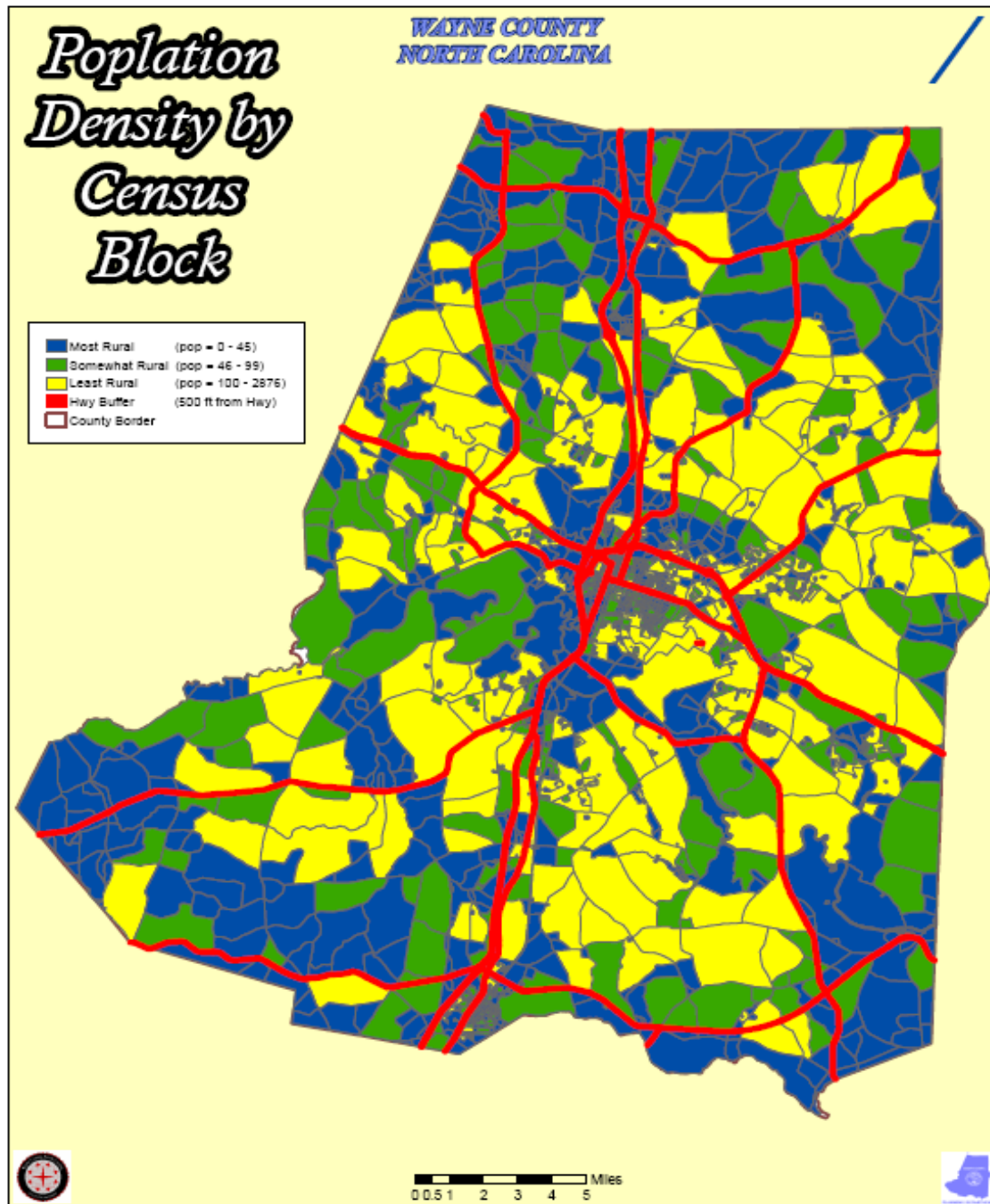


Figure 1

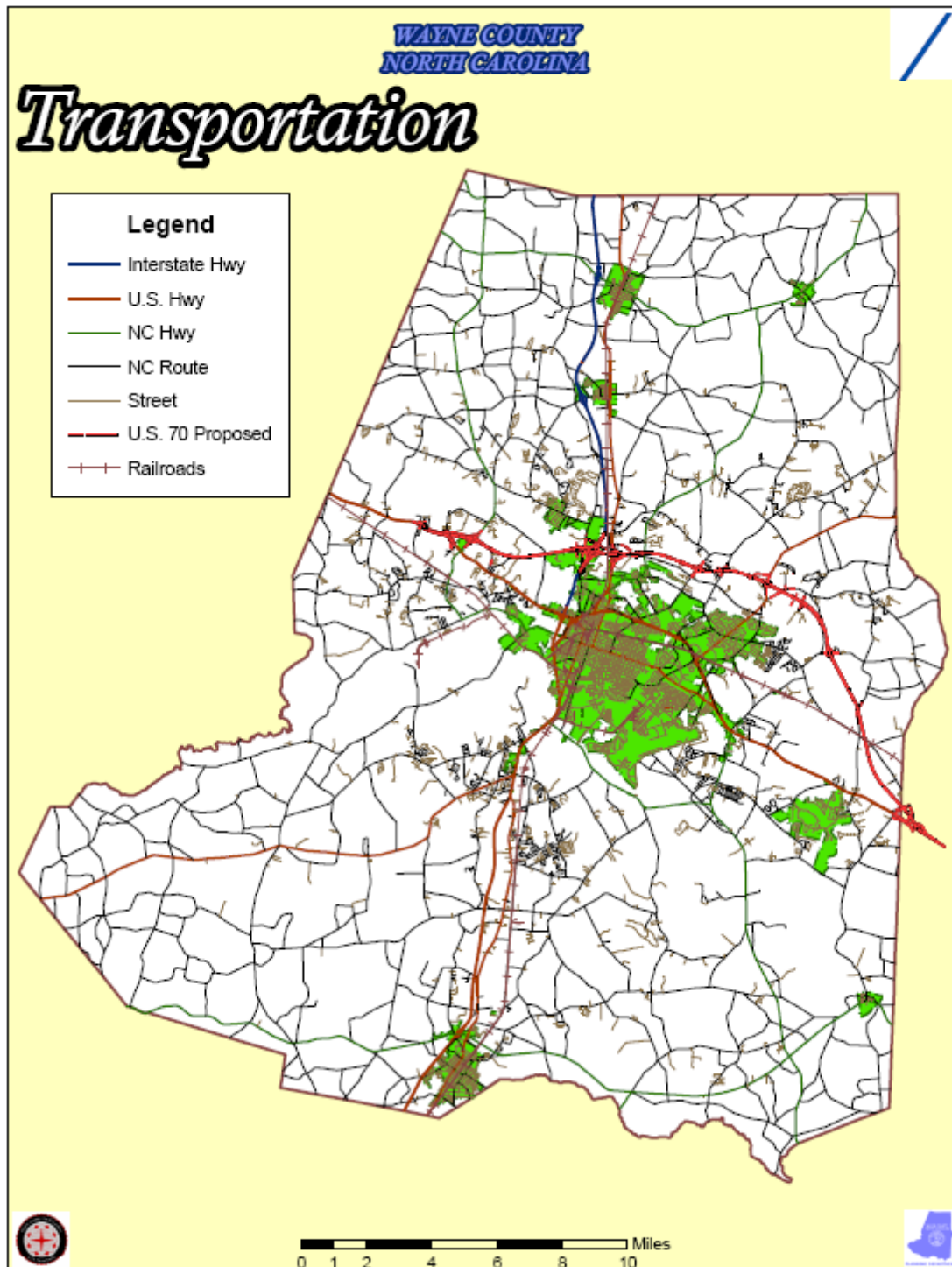


Figure 2

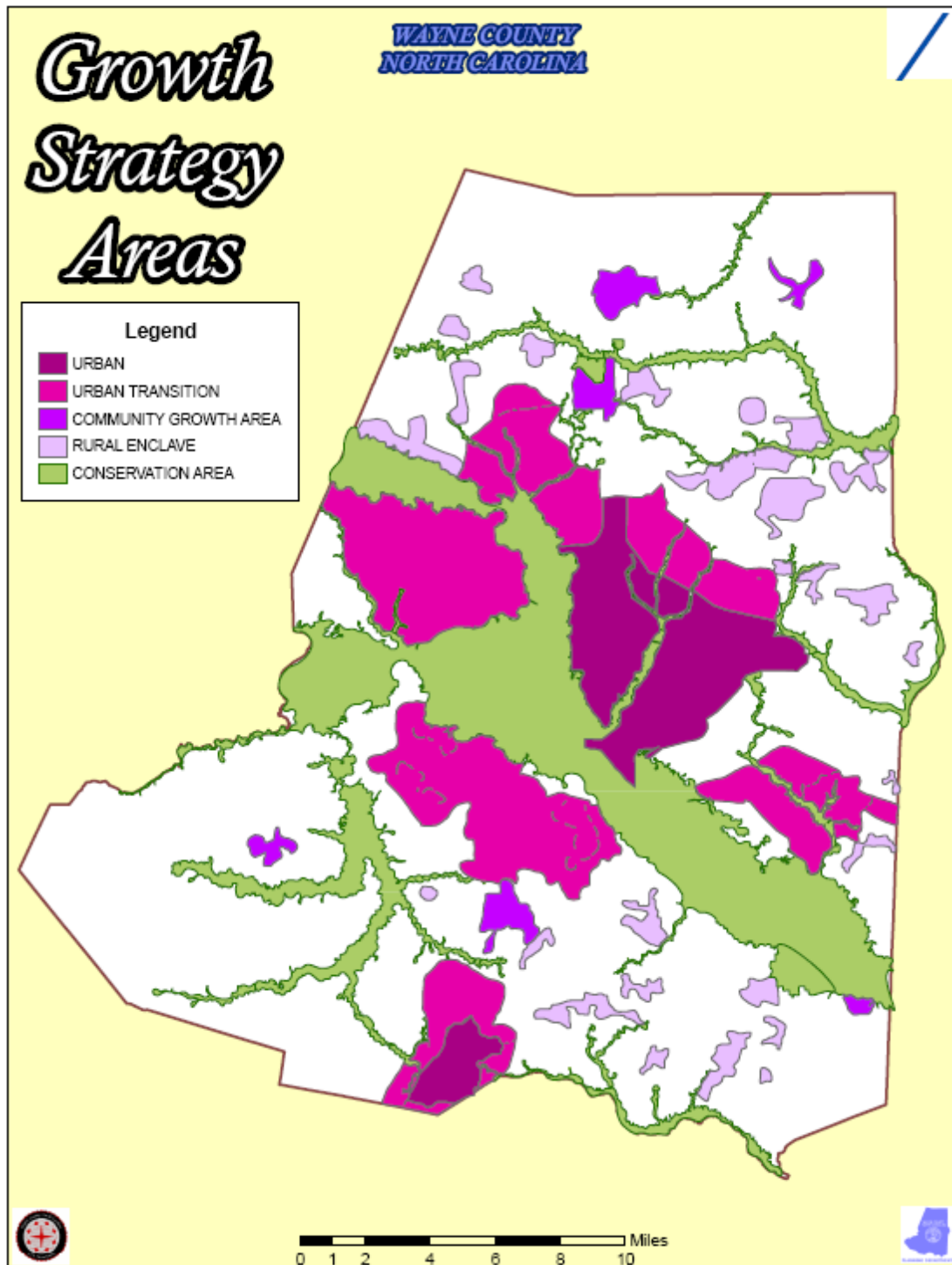


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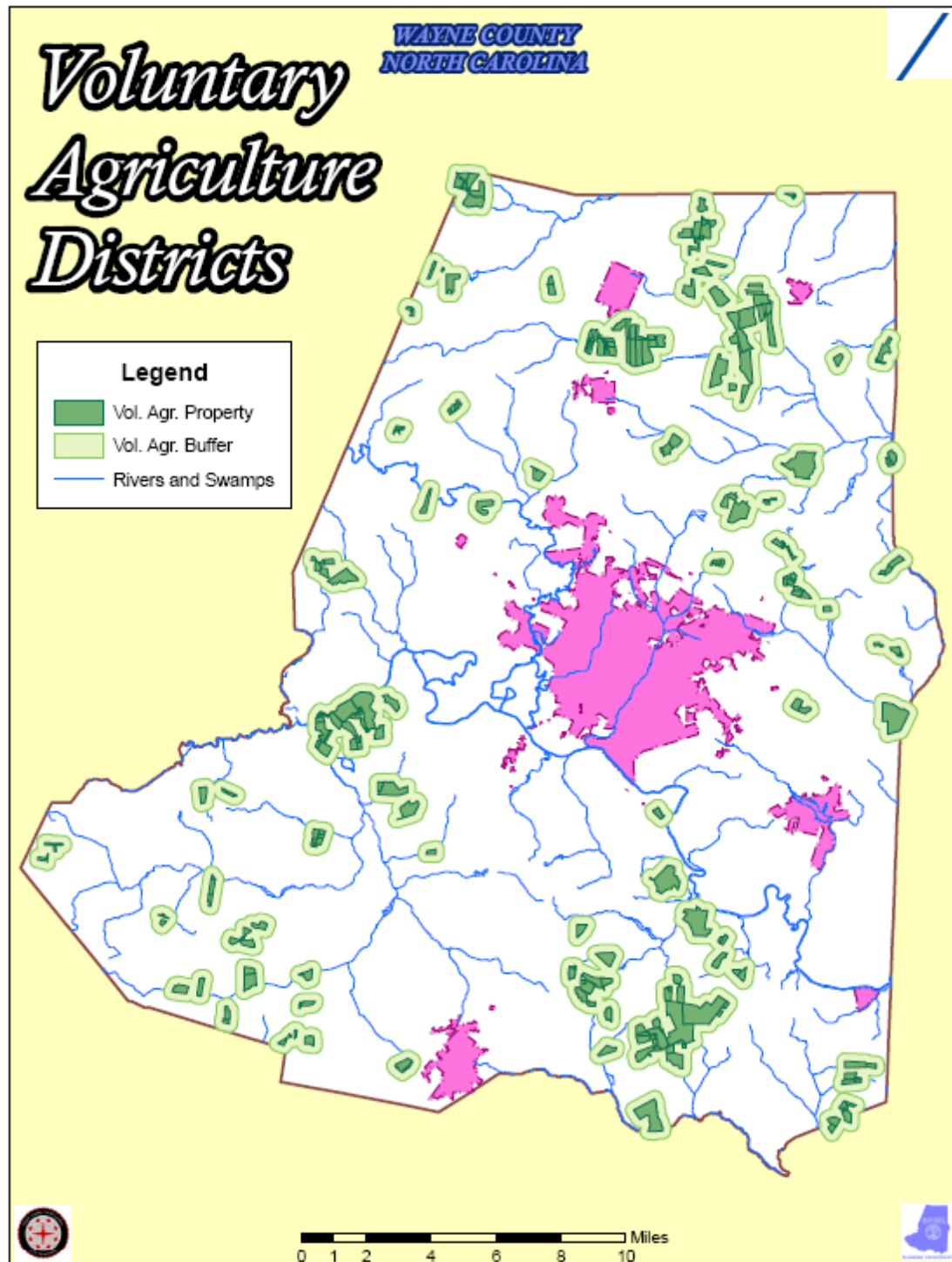


Figure 4

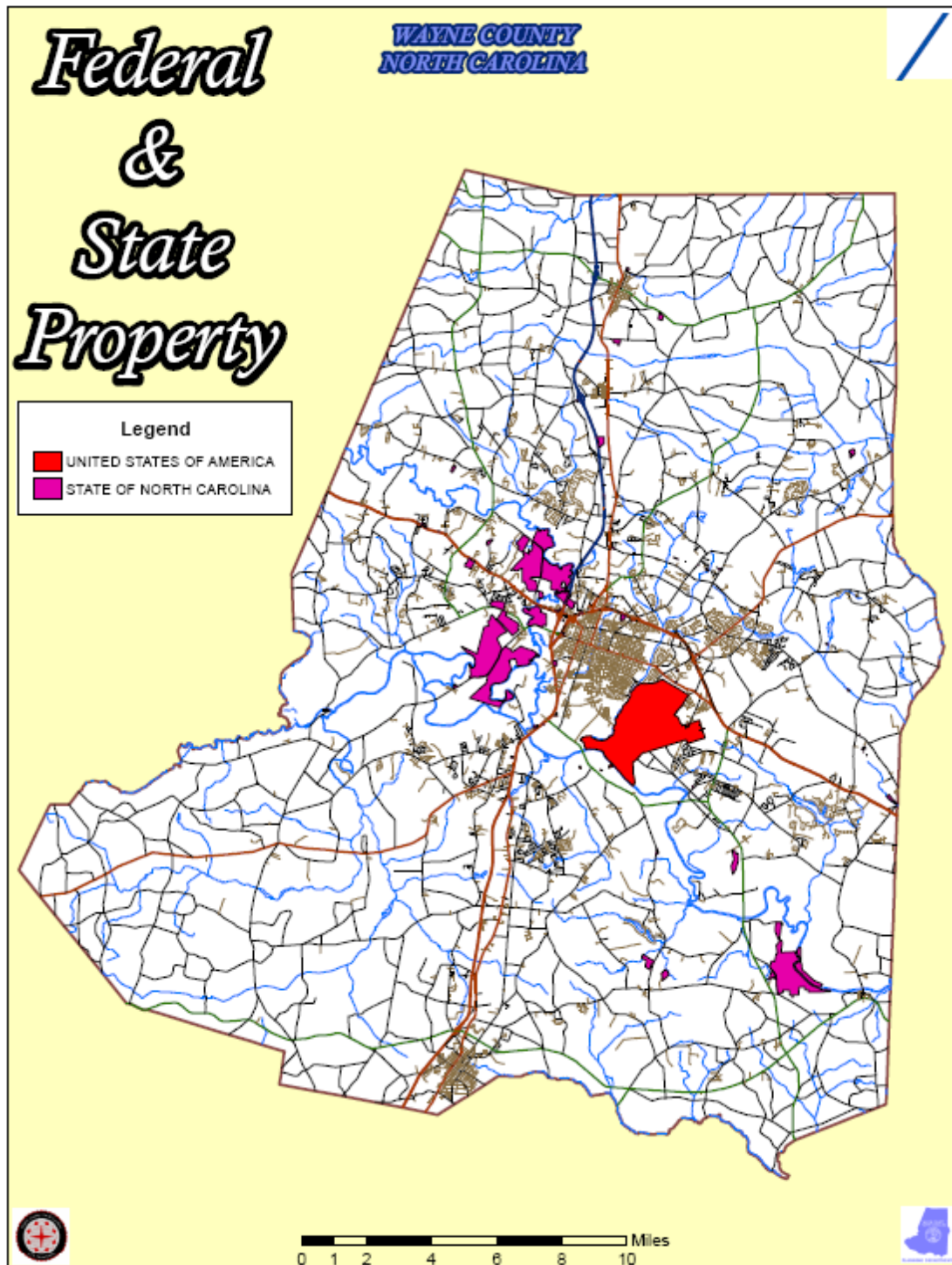


Figure 5

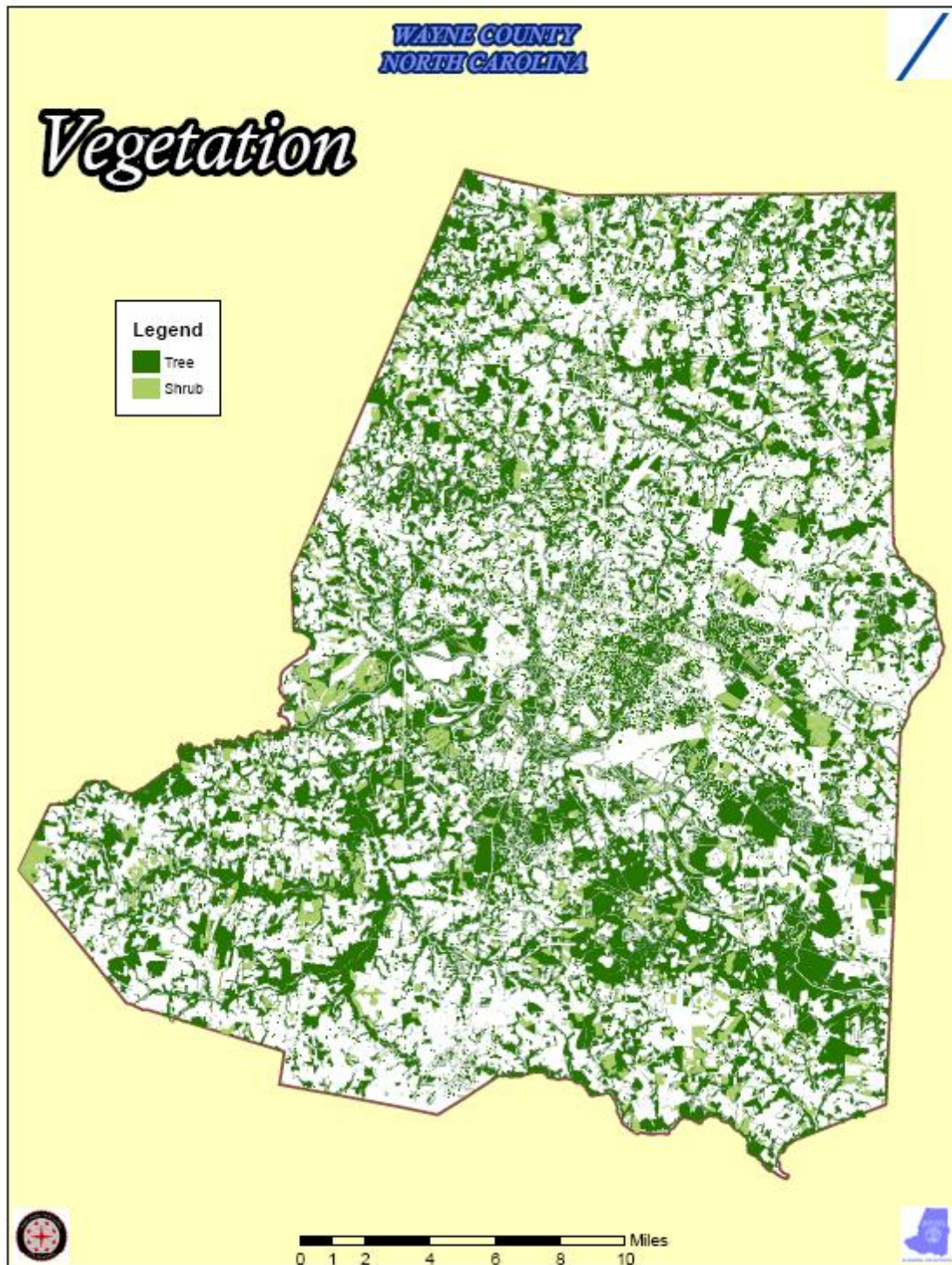


Figure 6

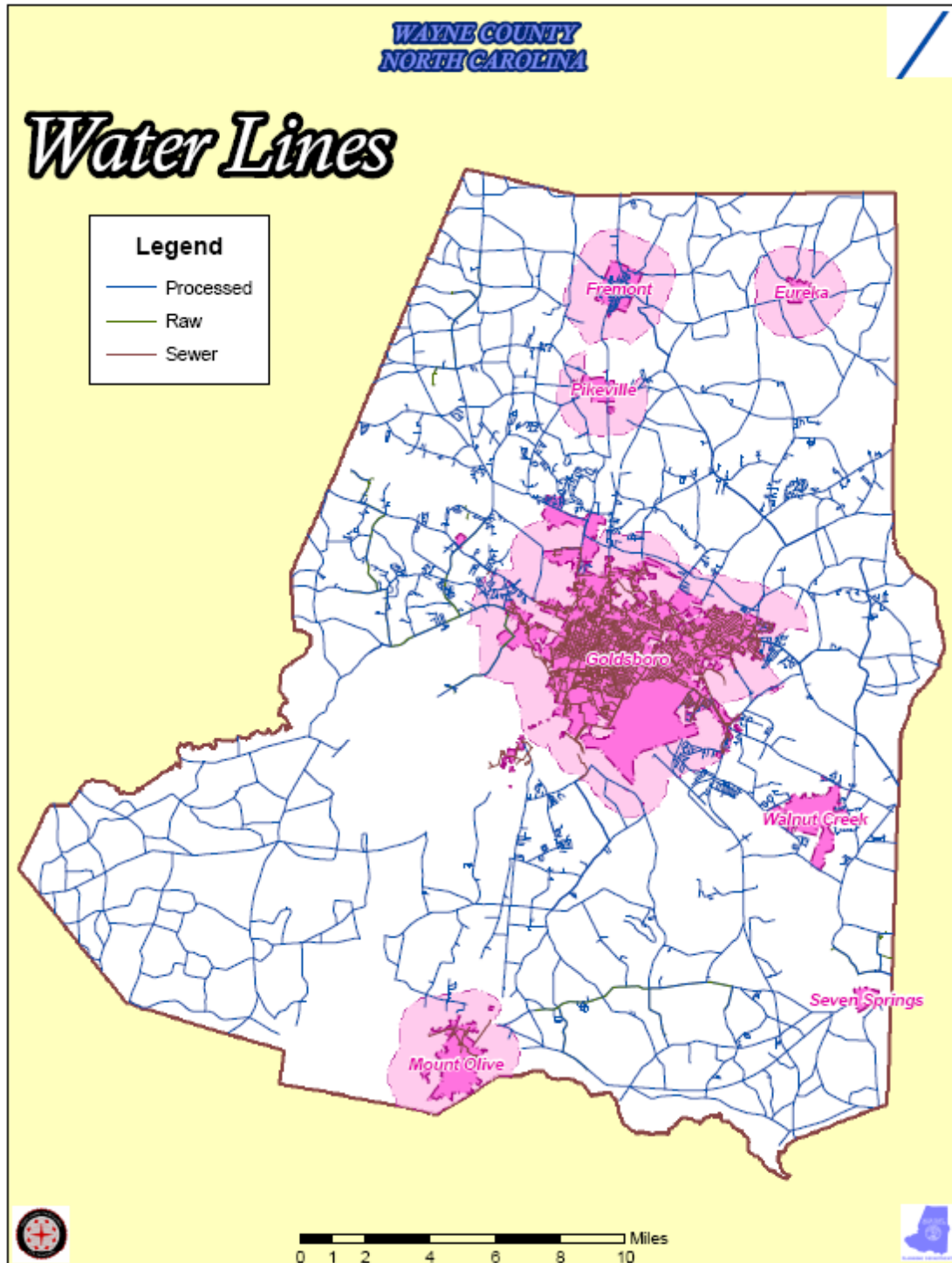


Figure 7

Appendix C: Surveys

Agricultural Producers, Agribusiness and Non-Farm Surveys

Surveys and interviews were conducted in the county to account for the trends, issues and opportunities the community as a whole identifies for agriculture. The populations targeted were producers/landowners, agri-businesses and the general non-farm public.

The Cooperative Extension, Wayne County Center distributed the surveys through their meetings, to their advisory boards and on their websites. The Wayne County Center also provided names of key people in the county to interview. All of the survey and interview responses were compiled to determine the response.

Copies of the three surveys follow.